

## **History of Asia**

Asia is home to some of the greatest ancient civilizations in the world. The valley between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers that is now part of modern Iraq was once called Mesopotamia. The first great civilization of Mesopotamia was the kingdom of Sumer, home of the Sumerians. The Sumerian civilization began around 5300 BCE and lasted for about 3000 years. The Sumerians had twenty major city-states plus smaller cities.

Mesopotamia was next home to the Babylonian civilization which began in 2500 BCE. During that time Babylon was the largest city in the world, with a population of about 200,000 people. Babylon was eventually conquered by the ancient Persians in 538 BCE. The Persians established a large empire that included Ancient Egypt in North Africa and lands northward bordering on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea including modern-day Syria.

While civilizations were thriving in western Asia the Indus civilization reached its own high level, lasting for 2000 years from 3300 to 1300 BCE. The Indus civilization is called that name because the people lived along the Indus River which flows through the Indian subcontinent of Asia. Historians think that climate change is responsible for the disappearance of the Indus civilization.

Elsewhere on the Asian continent archaeologists have found evidence that people of China were cultivating rice 7000 years ago and were producing silk fabric in about 1000 BCE. People lived in villages and cities without a central government until around 250 BCE when the first emperor ruled. After that time many Chinese dynasties, families that ruled China sometimes for centuries, provided a succession of emperors. The islands of Japan lie off the coast of China. Historians mark 300 BCE as the beginning of the Japanese civilization. The Japanese were first ruled by an emperor around 600 CE and Japan was ruled by an emperor until World War II.

The Mongols of Asia had an impact on both Asia and Europe. The fierce Mongol warriors conquered territory from the Pacific Ocean in the east to the Mediterranean Sea and the Danube River of Europe in the west. The Mongol Empire controlled twenty percent of the land on earth in the 1300s.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. Which of the following civilizations was located in Mesopotamia?
  - a. Mongol
  - b. Chinese
  - c. Japanese
  - d. Babylonian
  
2. Which of the following early civilizations was located on islands?
  - a. Sumerian
  - b. Japanese
  - c. Chinese
  - d. Babylonian
  
3. The Indus civilization was located in what part of Asia?
  - a. Arabian Peninsula
  - b. Himalayan Mountains
  - c. Indian subcontinent
  - d. Central Asia
  
4. Which early Asian civilization conquered the Ancient Egyptians?
  - a. Persians
  - b. Mongols
  - c. Sumerians
  - d. All of the above
  
5. A major product in Chinese history is
  - a. Cotton
  - b. Linen
  - c. Wool
  - d. Silk
  
6. The Mongols were known for
  - a. Building temples
  - b. Building roads
  - c. Being fierce warriors
  - d. Cultivating rice

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Short Answer Questions**

1. On a map of Asia locate the Tigris, Euphrates and Indus Rivers.
2. The Sumerians were one of the first civilizations to use writing. Do some research and explain why historians know so much about Sumerian writing.
3. Why aren't the Ancient Egyptians discussed as one of the important civilizations in this reading?
4. What is silk and how is it made?
5. The Mongol warriors had a reputation as fine horse riders and Mongol men today continue to be skilled riders. Do some research and write a short report about Mongol horses.
6. China and Japan developed different civilizations even though they are located close to each other. With a team of your classmates list some reasons why the civilizations might have developed separately.
7. From the civilizations discussed in this reading, which Asian civilization would you like to visit if you could travel back in time? Explain your answer.

## **Answer Key**

### **Multiple Choice**

1. d.
2. b.
3. c.
4. a.
5. d.
6. c.

### **Short Answer**

1. Individual response
2. The Sumerians wrote on clay tablets. Many clay tablets remain today.
3. This reading is about the history of the continent of Asia and Egypt is located on the continent of Africa.
4. Individual response
5. Individual response
6. Individual response
7. Individual response